

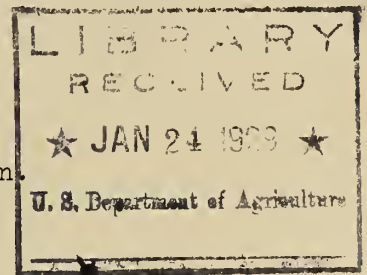
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MAKING THE LIVING ROOM LIVABLE

Radio Talk January 11, 1929, by Ruth Van Deman.
N. B. C. Network.



Mr. W. R. Beattie has certainly given us some excellent pointers about planning the grounds around the house. Makes me want to gather up all of my seed and nursery catalogs, settle down in a comfortable chair before the fire, with a light over my left shoulder, and map out gardens extensive enough for a Long Island estate.

Maybe you think for a sure enough gardener I'm too particular about the kind of chair, and the light over the left shoulder. Well, maybe I am, but I do like comfortable chairs, and I do like them placed in the best position in the room for use, as well as for looks.

In fact, that's about the whole secret of making a living room livable--- to have simple, attractive furnishings, and then to place them where they will serve the purpose they were built for. Generally this will make the best looking room too--- as any interior decorator will tell you.

Speaking of amateur interior decorators, I am going to tell you what three friends of mine did to transform Dr. Jane's stiff parlor into a comfortable family living room. No, they didn't buy a single new thing; they just rearranged what was there, according to ideas of comfort and use. Incidentally, they also followed the principles of balance, proportion, harmony, and the other high-sounding terms interior decorators use. But I'm not going to give you theory, I'm going to tell you just what they did.

It was this way. Dr. Jane's house, and particularly her big front room, was full of fine old-fashioned furniture--- the kind dealers are going through

the country buying up nowadays. The rugs also, and the pictures and curtains, were attractive, and harmonized well in color and style. The trouble was, Dr. Jane's room was a parlor, not a living room.

There were four nice chairs, set primly on the four corners of the large rug. The piano occupied the very best place in the room, and gave the impression of a parlor full of piano. A marble-topped table stood plumb in the center of the bay window, leaving room for nothing else, and shutting off light and view. A big easy chair, where Dr. Jane sat every evening, was right between two doors, always in a draft. She threw a shawl around her shoulder, just as regularly as she sat down.

And the mantel! You have all seen lots of mantels that looked like that. There were two really nice vases, and a fine old clock, but they were lost in a forest of tissue paper gimcracks, artificial trees, and cards left over from several Christmases. Then, standing up against the beautiful mirror, at the back of the mantel, were photographs of all the babies and high-school graduates of the family for several generations.

On the top of the piano were more photographs, some standing up straight, and some flopped over, on a pile of sheet music and hymn books.

There, that gives you a general picture of Dr. Jane's parlor. Everything for comfort and beauty, but missing it by a mile.

The three young persons, who had conspired to transform that room, waited their chance. It came one evening when Dr. Jane asked the musician of the trio, who was also a husky young man, whether he thought the piano might be injured by the heat from the register. It certainly was in danger, he told her frankly, and immediately he jumped up, beckoned to the others, and declared they were ready to move it if she but said the word. The next minute the piano was rolling toward the opposite wall between the two doorways, where it just fitted.

Then of course Dr. Janes's easy chair, and a small table and lamp, just had to be moved where the piano had been.

As soon as Dr. Jane sat down in her big chair after the move, she discovered that the arrangement was better for the piano, and for herself too. There was no draft on the back of her neck, and the light fell full on her book, over her left shoulder.

So she asked whether they had any other changes to suggest. Had they? Certainly they had, and there wasn't much in that room they didn't change, before they got through.

They pushed the marble-topped table to the side of the bay window, and turned it so that there is room beside it for a comfortable chair. Here Dr. Jane can sit, and get the fine view of the distant hills. Over the marble top, which looks so cold and forbidding, they draped an old-fashioned chintz cover, which Dr. Jane brought out of a chest. A lamp with a plain, creamy parchment shade, they brought from a corner, where it did no special good, and placed on this table. This made a second, well-lighted reading center. Behind the lamp next to the wall, they set up between brass book-ends a few of the recent books with gay bindings.

From the mantel, they banished everything but the vases, and the clock, and a small red lacquer box. The vases are soft blue in color and plain in shape. Next fall Dr. Jane is going to fill them with orange and red bittersweet to give gay color all winter. The top of the piano is now perfectly bare, so that when it is played, there is nothing on it to rustle, or to muffle the tone. The photographs have vanished, leaving just one, a well-framed likeness of Dr. Jane's father, on the table by her easy chair.

The small rugs, which ran diagonally across the bare floor, they straightened, parallel with the large rug. This made the room seem wider, and

more restful, and took away the effect of a jig-saw border around the large rug.

They rehung the pictures too, bringing them into better light, and down near the level of the eye.

The fine old secretary-desk, they opened up, placed pen and ink ready for use, and moved the floor lamp near it. They persuaded Dr. Jane to take the dark silk curtains from the glass doors of the secretary, so her books can be seen. There's almost nothing like rows of different colored books to add color to a room, they told her, and she agreed when she saw the change.

Dr. Jane is so pleased with the transformation of her parlor into a livable living room, that she talks about it to every one who comes in. She gave me permission to tell you about it, in case you want to try your hand at applying the theories of the interior decorators to your living room one of these long January evenings.

